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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2008

In Today's Papers:

The EU Issues PKK Report

Defense Minister Gonul Makes Controversial Comments

Industry Shrinks by 6.4 Percent

Journalists' Accreditation Revoked by Prime Ministry

High Expectations for G20

A Diplomatic Gesture from Switzerland

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The EU's Issues PKK Report  
Islamist-oriented Zaman says on its front page a report of the EU Institute for Security Studies (ISS) states the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) of northern Iraq has cut support for the PKK, but continues its policy of tolerance towards the organization. The ISS report estimates there are 5,000 PKK militants in northern Iraq and around 2,000 in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. The report notes that one of the chiefs of the PKK, Murat Karayilan, has met at least twice with officials from Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT). The ISS report cites comments by Masrur Barzani, son of KRG President Massoud Barzani, who is also the KRG intelligence chief. The report quotes Masrur Barzani as saying, "Abdullah Ocalan, who is in a prison on Imrali Island, is controlled by Turks and has been turned into "a propagandist for Kemalists." In addition, the report says Masrur emphasized, "Turkey does not want to force Ocalan to improve the situation because Turkey, or at least its military, has no interest in changing the situation." The report also notes Turkey could occupy the northern Iraqi city of Erbil within two hours, and it would be impossible to get Turkish troops out of the region once they get in.

Editorial Commentary on Turkish Democracy Debates/Kurdish Issue

Rusen Cakir wrote in mainstream Vatan: "AKP parliamentarians who are of Kurdish origin are concerned but hopeful regarding efforts to

find a solution to the Kurdish issue. After the AKP won the July 2007 elections PM Erdogan said that his party is the right one to address the Kurdish issue. Unfortunately, neither the AKP parliamentarians of Kurdish origin nor the PM put forth any suggestions to resolve the Kurdish issue. At this point, I really don't know what the PM can do about the Kurdish issue, but first of all he must change his derogatory attitude towards DTP. I don't believe that such an approach is suitable for the prime minister of a democratic country."

Cuneyt Ulsever wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "The government's intention to work for a civilian constitution is history. They are not even talking about it any more. In fact, Prime Minister Erdogan abandoned his freedom and democracy platform right after a date for negotiations was designated by the EU. In the eyes of the AKP government, this action from the EU was an endorsement of the AKP's legitimacy vis-à-vis the European Union and thus the AKP saw no need for further reform. In other words, the prime minister is no longer interested in a democratic republic, but he is interested in establishing a religious republic."

Serdar Akinan wrote in tabloid Aksam: "Diyarbakir has 200,000 children under the age of 18. Of the 145 people arrested in Diyarbakir during the most recent protests, 16 were elementary school students. 91 children were arrested in March 2006. Lawyers for these children claim the children were mistreated and tortured by the police and prison officials. Everyone agrees that if torture had not been used against PKK suspects in Diyarbakir in the 1980s, the PKK would not be as strong as it is today. Dozens of children remain in a Diyarbakir prison over charges of membership to terror

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organizations. What do you think will happen once those children are released from detention? This will become everyone's problem as everyone holds some kind of responsibility in this issue."

#### Defense Minister Gonul Makes Controversial Comments

Media outlets continue to highlight the ongoing controversy over Defense Minister Gonul's recent remarks which were interpreted as overly nationalistic. During a reception at the Turkish Embassy in Brussels, Minister Gonul said, "Turkey would not be the same country it is today if the Greek community still lived in the Aegean region or the Armenians still lived in many parts of Turkey."

Today's papers carry a public response from Minister Gonul saying that his words were "misunderstood" and he was "making reference to Turkey's foundation." Gonul added, "However, today minorities enrich our society." He also attempted to clarify his prior comments by saying, "while building a new country, neither Greece nor Turkey wanted different religious elements in their societies as they formed their identity."

#### Editorial Commentary on Gonul's Remarks

Hasan Cemal wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul asked if Turkey would be what it is today if Greeks and Armenians had been allowed to stay in Turkey. With such unacceptable comments coming from a state minister, how can Turkey advance toward democracy and human rights? How will Turkey succeed among contemporary civilizations with this kind of ignorant mentality? I wonder when Turkey will manage to mature? A state minister in a civilized country would not remain in his position after saying such things."

Ali Bayramoglu wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "There are dark points in every country's history. The 1915 disaster, the 1937 events that were anti-Semitic in nature and the 1942 Special Taxation Law for non-Muslims are some of our past events which call for a conscientious response. Unfortunately, the Defense Minister is now defending the dark intentions behind those past events. It is very unfortunate to see such a mentality is still alive and has representation in the government."

#### Turkish Industry Shrinks by 6.4 Percent

Media outlets report Turkey's industrial production, including automotive and technology sectors, has shrunk by 6.4 percent.

Automotive production was cut by 14,000 automobiles in September. The Turkish lira has fallen against the U.S. Dollar to a value of 1.61 YTL to \$1. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports gas stations continued selling petrol at high prices despite the 60 percent fall in global oil prices. Papers also report Prime Minister Erdogan as saying the global financial crisis has begun to ease off. The PM stressed his hopes continued that Turkey, with its strong economic structure, would be elevated to the level of "a financially attractive country."

#### Editorial Commentary on Turkey-IMF

Ali Bulac observes in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "Big capital groups in Turkey are pressuring the government to sign an agreement with the IMF in the face of the global financial crisis. Turkey's elite business circles have opposed the ruling AKP government over ideological concerns and are now blackmailing the government. The PM has even named those who have increased their wealth 6-7 times during the AKP's term. PM Erdogan must resist such pressures and stand behind his word that we don't have a penny to spend on those who want to benefit from the economic crisis."

#### Journalists' Accreditation Revoked by the Prime Ministry

All papers: Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that the Prime Ministry revoked the accreditation of six journalists yesterday without giving any reason for it. Mainstream Hurriyet's Hasan Tufekci and

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Turan Yilmaz, mainstream Milliyet's Abdullah Karakus, mainstream Star TV's Fatma Cozen, mainstream Aksam's Ali Ekber Erturk, and pro-Kurdish Evrensel's Sultan Ozer were told yesterday that their accreditations as prime ministry correspondents were not renewed. The Press Council statement criticized the revocations and said "such applications indicate the pressure on the press. We demand the annulment of the decision immediately."

#### High Expectations for the G20

Media outlets expect a lot from the G20 meeting, including the continuation of bailout measures on a wider and more comprehensive scale. NTV reports, "The G20 Will Take Measures," to address the global economic crisis, "in a united and coordinated effort." CNN Turk reports the G20 summit comes "as World Bank President Zoellick notes the number of countries needing assistance is climbing." Columnist Erinc Yeldan of leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet notes, "there is no one solution to this global crisis, one can't say to countries like Turkey 'reduce public expenditures and practice financial discipline,'" but it is expected "that whatever comes out of the summit, the G20 countries will see the necessity for more comprehensive support packages." Meanwhile, Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports the summit "seeks to solve the current economic crisis and find a way to return to normal in the markets." Columnist Ugur Gurses of liberal Radikal reports in "Economists Warn the G20," that "the countries comprising the G20 are prepared to suggest measures to deal with the global economic crisis, but what about Turkey?" Mainstream Hurriyet reports in, "Everyone is Having Difficulty and Wants Help as the U.S. Rescue Package Gets Crowded," that the Detroit auto giants, Fannie Mae, and American Express are joining the list of those who will be bailed out by the U.S. government.

In a related story, mainstream Hurriyet reports "Prime Minister Erdogan will not meet with President-elect Obama when he joins the G20 Summit in Washington," but "Erdogan will be able to send a message to the Obama Administration when he speaks to the Brookings Institution," which the paper describes as "the think tank that is closest to the Democrats."

#### A Diplomatic Gesture from Switzerland

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Yeni Safak, Vatan and others: President Gul and his visiting Swiss counterpart President Pascal Couchepin attended a ceremony at a historical museum in Ankara yesterday where Couchepin presented Gul with the table on which the Lausanne Treaty was signed. Couchepin said that Switzerland appointed its first Ambassador to Turkey in 1928 and he had presented his credentials to President Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. He also underlined the importance of the Lausanne Treaty signed in 1923 for bilateral relations,

reports mainstream Milliyet. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports that Couchepin and the Swiss government recently acted to halt money laundering activities by the PKK in Switzerland.

TV News  
Domestic

- The interrogation of 86 suspects implicated in the Ergenekon network has begun.
- Haci Uzen, the former head of the pro-Kurdish DTP branch in the southeastern town of Silopi, was given a one-year prison sentence on charges of spreading PKK propaganda.
- DTP leader Ahmet Turk says "Turkey would be much richer if defense spending had been used to boost the welfare of Turkish people."

International

- Representatives from Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States will meet in Paris on Thursday to discuss the next steps concerning Iran's nuclear program.

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- Israeli defense officials say the military has deployed remote-controlled machine-guns along its border with the Gaza Strip.

WILSON